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Dueling Eagles: Mihailovic, Tito, and the Western impact on World War II Yugoslavia

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*Dueling Eagles:
Mihaïlović, Tito, and the Western Impact
on World War II Yugoslavia*



Brian Bibb

Appendix A: Maps

1) Europe in 1941¹



¹ Credit to http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/images/English_map_5.jpg&imgrefurl=http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org

2) Partitioned Yugoslavia²



U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*. Series D (1937-1945), Vol. XII
Washington, DC: USGPO, 1962

YUGOSLAVIA AFTER AXIS CONQUEST. 1941-1945

*Note that Croatia was a semi-autonomous state ruled by Ante Pavelić and the Fascist Ustaše. The primary operations location for both guerilla groups was in Bosnia, but they were both active elsewhere as well. Serbia was under the command of former Serbian General Milan Nedić with German supervision. Dalmatia along the coast, Montenegro, and Albania were all under direct Italian military occupation.

² Credit to <http://www.srpska-mreza.com/MAPS/Yugoslavia/YU-Nazi-division.jpg&imgrefurl>

Appendix B: Pronunciation Guide

*Credit to Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962).

C	ts as in mats
Č	ch as in charge
Ć	similar to, but lighter than, č – as in arch
Dj	g as in George
G	g as in go
J	y as in yell
Lj	li as in million
Nj	n as in neutral
S	s as in sink
Š	sh as in shift
Z	z as in zodiac
Ž	s as in pleasure

–Preface–

How, over the course of three years, does a man go from hero to pariah? How does the champion of a nation fall out so far out of favor so quickly, from power to persecution? World War II in Yugoslavia lasted from 1941 until 1944 during which two men, Draža Mihailović and Josip Broz Tito, led separate and often conflicting guerilla resistance movements in an effort to liberate a nation from Axis occupation. Mihailović was the hero in the opening years of the war, but, with the subtle blessing of the allies, Tito supplanted Mihailović and emerged victorious. The dynamics at work were significant; it was a conflict of old and new, west and east, and even Democracy and Communism. The specific aspect of this conflict I chose to approach was the role of Western involvement in Yugoslavia and what impact that had on the outcome.

My topic is not one that had been studied particularly in depth, nor is it for that matter very mainstream in nature. Much of the general historical knowledge today revolves around the major events of the war, events like Operation Overlord and Pearl Harbor. Common knowledge might stretch as far as the campaign against Rommel in North Africa or the siege of Stalingrad, but few if any casual observers of the war today are familiar with the guerilla conflicts in the Balkans and Eastern Europe as a whole. The guerilla insurgency in Yugoslavia is no exception. Most historical writing on this subject occurred during the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's with a brief revival during the civil strife of the 1990's, and much of this writing focused on the broad military implications of the conflict. The majority of these writers were Mihailović apologists who focused exclusively on mustering historical evidence to vindicate a man they considered to be falsely accused and executed.

I took a different approach. I did not attempt to either prove or disprove anything about the actual conflict on the ground in Yugoslavia. Instead I chose to focus on how the guerilla conflict was perceived in the West. That was quite a broad goal, and I focused it by defining “the West” as Great Britain and the United States and gauged perception by first examining the official stance of the national leaders and second examining how this was reflected in the press and other generally accessible sources. My goal was to analyze the change in Western Perception from 1941 to 1946 to help explain and outline the contrasting journeys of Draža Mihailović and Josip Broz Tito. I argued that to the casual observer today, World War II in Yugoslavia is not a topic of general knowledge, but that was not true during the war. The press covered the war in extreme detail

all over the world and the particularly heroic stories of these two guerilla fighters were quite popular. They inspired books, movies, features in newspapers, and other expressions of popular interest. This combination of popular perception and the stance of the Western governments combine to trace the ebb and flow of the successes and eventual fates of Mihailović and Tito.

An understanding of the patterns of perception in the region is necessary to better understand how Western sources perceived the World War II conflict. There were a few key influences on how specifically Americans perceived the conflict. The growing anti-Communist sentiment in the United States led to the passage of bills like the Smith Act of 1940 that (indirectly and obscurely) permitted prosecution of suspected revolutionary Communists and a basal distrust of the Soviets as an ally. This growing prejudice was applied to Tito and his Partisan Communists at times during the war. Tito's supporters were primarily Croats from the north of Yugoslavia and, in the West, the Croats became associated with the quisling Ustaše fascists that ruled Croatia. This Croatian prejudice that ran against Tito's Partisans was coupled with a general recognition of Serbians as trusty and hardy people, though perhaps a bit rash and quick to anger. The positive Western perception of Serbia was built during the First World War when the Serbs stood essentially alone in the Balkans against the Central Powers. Maria Todorova's 1997 study *Imagining the Balkans*³ traced the development of Western perception of the Balkans up to the wars of the 1990's. Todorova argued that the term "Balkan" or "Balkanization" has long been used in a pejorative fashion, and, whether appropriate or not, this idea was applicable to this period. The Balkans were considered at this point to be a quite violent area, and a critical post-war consideration was determining what leader or political situation could help stabilize the Balkans. To understand not only how the wartime conflict developed but how that development shaped the future of post-war Yugoslavia, we must understand these contextual considerations. The Western Allies played a critical part in this shaping process, and the narrative produced by the Western press allowed a better understanding of the eventual successes and failures of Draža Mihailović and Josip Broz Tito as commanders, leaders, and international personalities.

³ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

I. Introduction

On June 10th, 1946, the summer hall at the infantry academy for the army of the People's Republic of Yugoslavia at Topčider⁴ was filling with spectators. Locals, foreigners, dignitaries, and members of the press corps were gathering in this suburb of Belgrade, Yugoslavia to bear witness to a treason trial. Twenty-four men were on trial, some in person and some ex parte. All these men stood accused of treason against their homeland, for making some effort to thwart the people's struggle for independence. Yugoslavia was a nation still scarred by a war that had ended only a year before, but the change in the political

landscape made the nation unrecognizable. A Communist

government led by wartime hero Marshal Tito had supplanted the monarchy that existed before the war. These alleged traitors, it was charged, had obstructed the efforts of Tito and his supporters and collaborated with the Axis forces that had occupied Yugoslavia. These men came from a variety of backgrounds, from the

Yugoslavian ambassador to the United States to officials in the wartime quisling government in Serbia, but all were purported to have engaged in some form or fashion of subversive activities during the war. Though twenty-four men stood trial, the government's prosecution had a clear, primary target. Dragoljub Mihailović was the leader of one of these wartime subversive

Figure 1: The defendants, from the stenographic record of the trial of Draža Mihailović



⁴ For aid in pronunciation, see the pronunciation guide preceding the preface. All names and locations are presented in Serbo-Croatian with all accompanying diacritic marks. At times when quotes are presented from other sources, names and places may be spelled in such a way as to make Serbo-Croatian stresses and accents acceptable to English readers. All spellings from sources are not disturbed and are presented as they appear in the source.

organizations and allegedly organized collaborative efforts with the occupiers, ethnic cleansings, and conducted operations against the Communist party.⁵

The story of Dragoljub (normally shortened to Draža) Mihailović was not as simple as it was presented in front of a military tribunal in a show trial – like atmosphere in the summer of 1946. Mihailović was a war hero in 1941, but as the years passed, he moved steadily into the growing shadow of his rival, Marshal Tito. Now he stood alone, forsaken and accused of treason by the government of the nation he had fought to preserve. How, then, did Mihailović turn from savior to pariah, from hero to traitor? How did a man, lauded by Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill during the early years of the war, find himself seemingly left to his fate before a hostile court run by the victor of a wartime feud?

The Second World War, as its name suggests, was a global conflict that embroiled peoples of many races and backgrounds. The conflict in Yugoslavia, though left out or brushed over in most mainstream narrative accounts, was nonetheless a critical part of the war against the Axis and representative of the sacrifices made by the occupied peoples in Europe. These minor conflicts, though of less consequence in the larger picture of the war today, were quite well covered by the press in the United States and Great Britain during the war. The conflict in Yugoslavia was no exception. The Western governments played a critical role in the development of the Tito – Mihailović wartime conflict because the Western leaders were forced to decide which group to aid with military and medical supplies. Mihailović had the support of the Western leaders from the initiation of his operations in April of 1941 until February of 1944 when Churchill made the decision to shift his official support to Marshal Tito.

How then did this relate to the plight of Mihailović standing before a tribunal in 1946 a year after the war's conclusion? The decisions of the Western leaders helped to push Tito to the forefront and

⁵ Account taken from Union of Journalists Association of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, *Trial of Dragoljub – Draža Mihailović* (Belgrade: State Printing House, 1946).

eventually allow him to take control in post-war Yugoslavia, but how did the Western public react? How did the perception of the guerilla conflict in Yugoslavia change among the peoples of Great Britain and the United States and how was this change related to the activities of their leaders? The journey and subsequent fate of Draža Mihailović was tied inexorably to how he was perceived by the Western public and their leaders because the powers of the West could provide his soldiers the means necessary to gain an edge against their rival. Whether Tito or Mihailović, whoever emerged on top after the war would be in the best position to secure power. The perception of the peoples of Great Britain and the United States and their leaders would serve as a barometer for the success and future prospects for the would-be war heroes. Thus, as German military divisions rolled into Slovenia and Croatia from the North in April 1941, the stage was set for what Louis Adamic called a “New Deal,”⁶ in Yugoslavia. The struggle both against enemies at home and for recognition abroad began. Both men were poised to become heroes, but only the victor would have the luxury of writing history.

II. 1941-1942 in Yugoslavia

A. Yugoslavia – A Nation in Crisis

In 1919, the Western allies helped to legitimize and bring together several new nations during their post-war meetings and negotiations at the palace of Versailles outside Paris⁷. One of these nations of political and punitive convenience was Yugoslavia, which literally means “land of the south Slavs.” This nation, forged primarily out of lands taken from the defeated Hungarians, Austrians, and the sovereign states of Serbia and Montenegro, struggled to embrace a national identity. The lands of this new Yugoslavia endured centuries of occupation and rule by Ottoman Turks and Hungarians before Serbia alone was able to throw off the yoke of foreign rule and

⁶ Louis Adamic, “Mikhailovitch: Balkan Mystery Man,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, (19 December 1942), 20.

⁷ For an excellent general overview of Yugoslavian history in its entirety, consult John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For a more specific study of wartime Yugoslavia and Western involvement, consult Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovic, and the Allies, 1941-1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973). Background information is taken from these sources.

establish sovereignty in the 19th Century. These people were asked to forget cultural and ethnic differences and form a new government under the Serbian King Aleksander. Aleksander was a member of the Serbian Karađorđević dynasty, named for Karađorđe, the 18th-19th century Serbian revolutionary whose name literally meant “Black George.” The three major ethnic groups, Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, were unable to successfully rule Yugoslavia in a parliamentary system and, in 1929, Aleksander dissolved the parliament and established a monarchial and military dictatorship.

Aleksander was unpopular, and struggled to lead his young nation through the economic and political upheavals of the 1930’s in Europe. While in Marseilles in 1934, Aleksander was assassinated by a Macedonian revolutionary supported by the fascist Croatian Ustaše movement. His brother, Prince Paul, ruled as regent in place of Aleksander’s 11 year old son, Peter. Hitler began to pressure Prince Paul to sign the Tripartite Pact in 1940, and after attempting to avoid any sort of formal commitment for over a year, Prince Paul and his military advisors signed a pact of mutual cooperation with Hitler on March 25th, 1941. Two days later, a military coup d’état led by Yugoslavian General Dusan Simović

wrested power away from Prince Paul and prepared to resist the Germans. Hitler decided to postpone Operation Barbarossa against the Soviets. The Italians were struggling to subdue Greek resistance and the renewed threat in

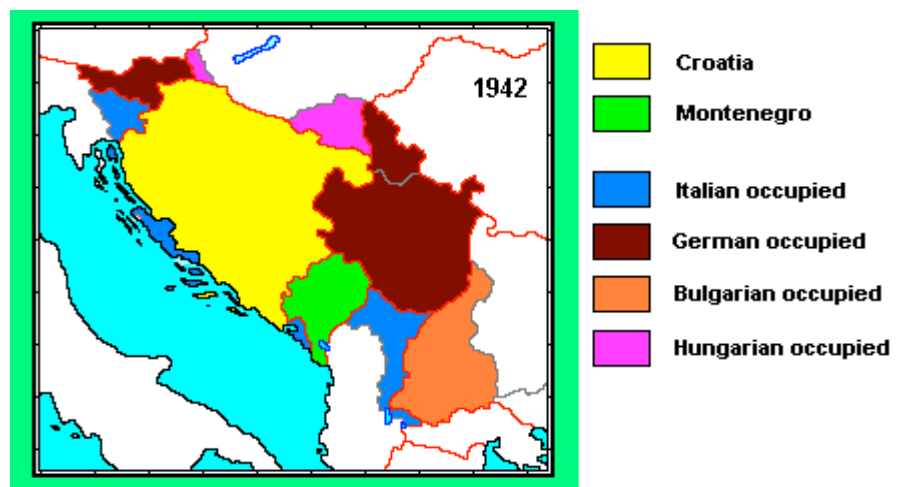


Figure 2: <http://www.zum.de/histatlas/balkans/haxyugoslavia.html>

Yugoslavia, however minor was troubling to the German leadership. The Germans invaded and, by April 17th, Yugoslavia had surrendered and was partitioned (see figure 2). The coastlands of Dalmatia and Montenegro fell directly to Italy, and Croatia became a Fascist state under Ante Pavelić, returned from exile in Italy, and his Ustaše fascists. Hitler gave Serbia to another quisling

named Milan Nedić, a former Yugoslavian general. Meanwhile, King Peter, now 18 years old, fled first to Cairo and then to London, establishing a government in exile for his beleaguered and broken nation. It was in this atmosphere of chaos and confusion within the borders of a divided and desperate nation that Draža Mihailović began his journey. Mihailović fled to Bosnia where he would remain for much of the war, and immediately moved to inform his government of his location and his intentions to resist the occupiers.

In Zagreb, Croatia, Josip Broz had weathered the storm of Nazi invasion in hiding in his downtown apartment. Josip Broz was the chairman and leader of an illegal and secret organization known as the CPY, or Communist Party of Yugoslavia. A machinist by trade, Broz, now 49, had spent the majority of his life on the run. He traveled across Yugoslavia advocating pro-worker reform and had consequently spent substantial amounts of time in prison for what was illegal rhetoric in inter-war Yugoslavia. Broz was well trained in Communist, specifically Bolshevik, methods, having witnessed the revolution of 1917 in Russia first-hand. When hostilities commenced, Broz fled to Belgrade. In Belgrade he met with his Politburo and decided to begin an uprising of the CPY against the occupiers, in part at least to relieve pressure from the new front forming in the Soviet Union. On the day of the German invasion of the USSR, Josip Broz, known by the codename “Tito” to the majority of the CPY, called upon all Yugoslavian Communists in a proclamation. Tito said that, “The hour has struck to take arms for your freedom against Fascist aggressors. Do your part in the fight for freedom under the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The war of the Soviet Union is your war, because the Soviet Union is fighting the enemies, under whose yoke your necks are bent.”⁸ As the fall of 1941 began in Yugoslavia, two men of different origins and different motives began separate and eventually conflicting struggles to free their nation from the occupiers. By the close of 1941 however only one of them was receiving coverage in the Western press.

B. 1941 – 1942 in the Eyes of the West

⁸ Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 149.

On May 25th, 1942, the cover of *Time Magazine* pictured Draža Mihailović, the “Eagle of Yugoslavia”, pictured against a backdrop of mountain crags. *Time*’s portrayal of Mihailović was admiring, if not reverent. *Time* wrote that, “As a legend, Draža Mihailovich will unquestionably live as long as World War II is remembered.”⁹ Draža Mihailović and his Četniks during 1941 and 1942 were depicted as heroes by the western media. Mihailović’s freedom



Figure 3: Mihailović pictured on *Time* cover May 25th, 1942

fighters represented that spirit of seemingly futile resistance in the face of incalculable odds which many American and British observers could not see elsewhere in occupied Europe. *Time*’s glowing appraisal of Mihailović and his Četnik guerillas was not an aberration but the norm in Western press coverage of Yugoslavia during the first two years of the conflict. C. E. Black, the Eastern Europe correspondent for *Current History* magazine in the United States, wrote in his October 1942 evaluation of the situation within occupied Yugoslavia, “In the Balkans, there was every evidence that the spirit of the conquered peoples was not only high, but that it was constantly growing more

⁹ “The Eagle of Yugoslavia,” *Time*, (25 May 1942).

daring and aggressive.”¹⁰ The Serbian people, so hardened by occupation and conflict in the past, were now refusing to be subjugated by yet another encroaching foreign power.

This Western image of the indomitable people of Serbia was quite prevalent, fueled by the continuing reports of bravery and resistance within Yugoslavia. Ray Brock wrote in the October 12, 1941 edition of the *New York Times* that, “These Chetniks...vowed to fight for their country not to ‘the last Serbian,’ but to ‘the last German,’ or ‘the last Italian.’ They are villagers and city folk, farmer, shepherds, sailors, small merchants. Some of them have picked up their weapons for their homeland in as many as four wars.”¹¹ In this article entitled “They are Accustomed to Die,” Ray Brock, who was in country when the Nazi invasion began, praised the Serbian people for their hardiness and their readiness to fight for their homeland. The Serbian people had a certain reputation in the West for hardiness, perhaps formed in no small part by Serbia’s role in the First World War. Serbia, then an independent nation, refused to accept Austro-Hungarian ultimatums that would have infringed upon their sovereignty and fought a brave war against a far larger foe. Serbian scholar Aleksa Djilas called this Western idea of a common trait of “malevolent, vengeful, and obstinate defiance” among the Serbian people *inat*.¹² This concept of the *inat* in the West was built upon the successes of the Serbian people against the Ottomans and in the First World War, but *inat* was also clear in the 1920’s when the Serbians were unwilling to accept a compromise Democratic government. Brock praised not only the Serbian people, but also the history of the Četnik movement, both during conflict and in peacetime government. Brock wrote that, “While picturesque and reckless in action, the Četniks in peacetime are among the foremost government leaders and advisers, with a strong sense of politics and diplomacy.”¹³

¹⁰ C. E. Black, “Revolt in the Balkans,” *Current History*, 3 (October 1942): 131-133.

¹¹ Ray Brock, “They are Accustomed To Die,” *New York Times*, (12 October 1941), 6(SM).

¹² Aleksa Djilas, “Funeral Oration for Yugoslavia,” Dejan Djokić, ed., *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 317-318.

¹³ Ray Brock, “They are Accustomed To Die,” *New York Times*, (12 October 1941), 6(SM).

Amidst such positive spotlight pieces, the Četniks were receiving a near total monopoly of coverage and credit for all acts of sabotage and resistance within Yugoslavia. This was, perhaps, less than totally accurate. Tito and his partisans had been actively resisting foreign occupation, though how much and to what extent in comparison to Mihailović is difficult to say. There were no impartial accounts of this period in Yugoslavia, and much of the first hand accounts are a bit chaotic. There were, however, a few examples of attacks that the Western press attributed to Mihailović that were almost certainly associated with Tito and his Partisans. For example, *The New York Times* reported on December 5th, 1941 that, “The Serbian forces of General Draja Mkahilovitch counter-attacked a German armored column in the snowy heights above Uzice.”¹⁴ This attack was probably not directed towards the Četniks (though to what degree the Germans understood and consciously acted upon the separation among Yugoslav resistance at this point is uncertain). Uzice was, according to Tito’s wartime account, the Partisan headquarters in the later parts of 1941 and printing location of the Partisan propaganda newspaper, *Borba*.¹⁵ These and other inaccuracies, particularly during the early stages of guerilla conflict within Yugoslavia, were probably not malicious or deliberate in purpose. Most likely they can be attributed to simple ignorance and lack of solid information (either official or otherwise) coming from sources who were aware of actual events.

Why then was Mihailović receiving a monopoly of attention and coverage in the western press? Mihailović was fighting the Germans, but so was Tito. The difference was not in their composition, position, or activity, but in what official recognition they could gather. Mihailović was a Serbian member of the Royal Army of Yugoslavia, and thus when Mihailović informed the Yugoslav government in exile, first stationed in Cairo and then in London, that he had escaped to Ravna Gora, Mihailović was naturally recognized as a bastion of Yugoslav resistance in a maelstrom of violence. The contrast between Tito and Mihailović even at this stage was stark. Tito was the leader of an

¹⁴ Ray Brock, “Serbians Extend Fight to Danube,” *New York Time*, (6 December 1941), 1.

¹⁵ Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 160.

organization seen as dangerous, subversive, and hence illegal by the official government of Yugoslavia during the pre-war years. Mihailović was not only a loyalist leader of resistance forces, but as a former member of the military, his continuing defiance of German occupation could lend a degree of legitimacy to the Yugoslavian government's claims of ongoing resistance. Mihailović was King Peter's chosen champion, and both men became intertwined as the success of one would lead to the success of the other. King Peter needed the military legitimacy of Mihailović to ensure that his nation would be returned to him after the war and Mihailović needed the political legitimacy Peter could use to procure arms and supplies from the Western Allies. It was with this idea in mind that Peter promoted then Colonel Mihailović to Brigadier General and Secretary of War on December 7th, 1941.¹⁶

Figure 4: Mihailović as he most likely appeared during wartime. From *Patriot or Traitor* by David Martin.



The impact of this relationship on the Western role in Yugoslavia was more significant than it appears. Both Roosevelt and Churchill had committed themselves publically to the support of the troubled young monarch and his official government in London. On April 4th, 1941, *The Times* in London reported that, “The British Government declared that it was their intention fully to restore the independence of Yugoslavia.”¹⁷ Likewise, on April 9th, *The Times* reported Roosevelt's assurances of support to the distressed Yugoslavs. Even prior to official United States entry into the war, Roosevelt promised “all material aid possible in accordance with the existing statutes,” and expressed his “most earnest hopes for a most successful resistance to this

¹⁶ Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovic, and the Allies, 1941-1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 367-368.

¹⁷ “British Promise to Yugoslavia,” *The London Times*, (4 April 1941).

criminal assault.”¹⁸ On December 18th, 1941, King Peter spoke at a luncheon for the National Defence Public Interest Committee in Dorchester, Britain. Peter criticized the totalitarian rule of his father and uncle and pointed out key errors made by the regency that preceded him and defending the actions of his people during the coup d’état in March of 1941. Secretary of State for British colonial India Amery, present at the luncheon, said, “(we) looked to King Peter to play a great part in the creation of the true new order in Europe.”¹⁹ Peter and his government were becoming more than just a successful group of revolutionaries; they were becoming legitimate political players on the world stage.

On the ground in Yugoslavia, Mihailović received the first envoy from the British military, Captain L. T. Hudson, in October 1941.²⁰ The Western allies had chosen their champion and, in accordance with the requests from King Peter and his government, began a limited program of arms and supplies distribution to Mihailović and his Četnik fighters. Tito appeared to have been passed over by the Western allies, though not unexpectedly and perhaps due to ignorance. Tito himself bargained at least on the recognition and support of the Soviet Union. The political predicament of the Soviet Union was more complex than those of Britain or the United States as the Soviets were fully aware of the presence of Partisan resistance in Yugoslavia but still committed to the official organ of the Yugoslavian government in London. Stalin denied Tito military aid and political recognition. Tito and his Politburo made concerted efforts to obtain Soviet military aid, but were repeatedly denied because of supposed infeasibility and possible political complications.²¹ Stalin’s motivations for denying the most active Communist resistance movement in Europe aid or even recognition were many and varied, but Tito wrote that, “Stalin never wanted a new progressive movement to be created...which would rely on its own forces, and would not await liberation from

¹⁸ “All Possible US Aid to Yugoslavia,” *The London Times*, (4 April 1941).

¹⁹ “Yugoslavia After The War,” *The London Times*, (18 December 1941).

²⁰ Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovic, and the Allies, 1941-1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 28-29.

²¹ Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 175-178.

the Red Army.”²² The lack of Soviet aid left Tito essentially alone without badly needed ammunition, food, and medical supplies to provide for his guerilla forces.

By mid 1942, the Western press and Western governments were singing the praises of Draža Mihailović, the so-called “Eagle of Yugoslavia”, defender of a nation and retainer of the King. Josip Broz Tito and his Communist Partisans were also fighting for the freedom of their homeland, but their coverage was limited to smatterings of reports about captured Communists being executed by German and Ustaše occupiers. The people in the United States and Great Britain read about Mihailović exclusively as he was the target of focused official Yugoslavian propaganda and officially supported by the Western leaders. In late 1942, however, reports of a breakdown of cooperation between the Partisans and Četniks began to surface in the Western media, and a civil war began that encompassed not only the combatants on the ground in Yugoslavia, but that spread into both public and private spheres in the West.

III. 1942-1943 in Yugoslavia

A. Četniks and Partisans – Composition and Motivations

Late in 1942, reports began to surface in the Western press of clashes within Yugoslavia not between the guerillas and the occupiers, but instead between opposing groups of Yugoslavian freedom fighters. Hanson Baldwin, in November 1942, wrote in the *New York Times* that, “Within Yugoslavia, a ‘house divided against itself’ is torn by warfare against axis invaders, by guerilla attacks and civil strife.”²³ The “civil strife” that Hanson Baldwin was referring to was no innovation in local Slavic affairs but more a refrain of years past. Yugoslavia was a nation built on convenience rather than cohesion. The region had been torn asunder and reassembled after the Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913 and again by the treaty of Versailles in 1919. The conflicts in part broke down along ethnic lines, and these ethnic and ideological tensions again boiled over beginning in 1942. The

²² Ibid., 178.

²³ Hanson Baldwin, “Within Yugoslavia – I,” *New York Times*, (19 November 1942), 12.

surprising revelation that Draža Mihailović was not the only freedom fighter in Yugoslavia changed

the direction of and influences on Western perception during 1942 and into 1943.

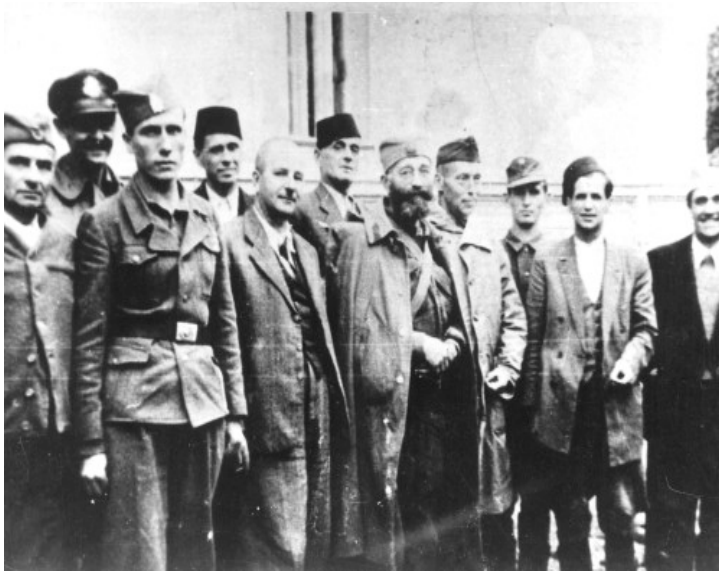


Figure 5: Draža Mihailović with American Colonel McDowell and Četnik officers in September 1944 at Dvori. Image taken from *Trial of Dragoljub-Draža Mihailović*, 96.

The roots of the Četnik movement were quite deep in south Slavic culture. Četnik comes from the Serbo-Croatian word *četa* which means military company, and this movement was no innovation. The south Slavic peoples endured centuries of foreign occupation, and, often unable to muster traditional,

organized resistance, they opposed their occupiers by covert sabotage and guerilla warfare. In the prewar years, the Četnik organization was more of a club for Serbian military veterans, but its direction and purpose would change drastically during the first year of the conflict. Draža Mihailović had fought for Serbia in a series of wars in the Balkans including The First and Second Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and the First World War, and he was a colonel in the royal military in Belgrade when the German military invaded in April 1941. Mihailović was uniquely qualified to lead a guerilla movement as he was one of a minority of interwar Yugoslavian officers to advocate a guerilla infrastructure in the military. In the late 1930's, Mihailović was jailed for thirty days for advocating subdivision of the Yugoslavian military into sub-national ethnic units in order to encourage greater morale and effective cohesion.²⁴

²⁴ Philip B. Minehan, *Civil War and World War in Europe: Spain, Yugoslavia, and Greece, 1936-1949* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 107.

Mihailović fled Belgrade in April 1941 and reached Ravna Gora by May 13th with a small nucleus of his military colleagues who escaped imprisonment. This group met to decide how best to proceed against foreign occupation. Their choice of direction would be fateful. With Mihailović presiding, the group made a few key decisions. First, they would declare themselves to the fleeing official government as a resistance movement, though what that might entail was more complex. Mihailović thought, and the majority agreed, that true, offensive resistance was impractical as they could not hope to hold territory even if they could liberate it. Their primary goals should be to recruit primarily from the Serbian national infrastructure of the Četnik organization and organize for calculated resistance. When sufficiently organized for military action, they then might engage in defensive maneuvers and measured offensive sabotage and disruption.²⁵ Fear of reprisals and a conservative eye toward an eventual allied liberation of Yugoslavia both contributed to the formation of this particular policy.

To the British, by late 1942 Mihailović seemed irrationally conservative. Colonel Bailey of the British military overheard (not accidentally to be sure) a speech delivered by Draža Mihailović to his troops on February 28th, 1943. Mihailović enumerated five facts about the state of resistance in Yugoslavia. First, the Serbs were “completely friendless; that the British, to suit their own strategic purposes, were pressing them to engage in operations without any intent of helping them.”²⁶ Second, King Peter his government were being held hostage by the British government, slaves to the whims of Churchill. Third, the activities of the partisans were “hypocritical and anti-Yugoslav ... (and) a satisfaction for the Allies’ lust for fraud.” Fourth, he would continue to accommodate Italian forces so long as they remained his “only adequate source of help generally.” Fifth, and most troubling for the British, Mihailović would only turn to fighting Germans and Italians once “the Ustashi, the Partisans, the Croats, and the Moslems,” had been dealt with.

²⁵ Ibid., 109.

²⁶ Quotes taken from Colonel Bailey’s report to Churchill, found in Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovic, and the Allies, 1941-1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 93.

This report was earth shattering for the British and their confidence in Mihailović as a champion of anti-axis resistance in Yugoslavia, but it was also demonstrative of Mihailović's stance on the conflict. To Mihailović, the war was primarily internal, not external. The Partisans, Ustaše, Croats, and Moslems (Bosnian Serbs) were the real enemies. Interesting here was his greatest omission of the quisling Serbs under Milan Nedić. Nedić's Vichy France-like government, sponsored by the axis, seemed to be a logical target, even if Mihailović limited himself to domestic foes. Mihailović was a Serb, and his Četnik forces were nearly homogeneous in contrast to the ethnic pluralism of the Partisans. Mihailović left out the Serb traitor and targeted all those of other ethnic backgrounds. To Churchill, this was troubling. He wrote a remark to Yugoslav Prime Minister Jovanović in which he said that "His majesties government...could never justify to the British people nor to their own Allies their continued support of a movement, the leader of which does not scruple to declare...that his enemies are not Germans and Italians, invaders of his country, but his fellow Yugoslavs and chief among them men who at this very moment are fighting and giving their lives to free his country from the foreigner's yoke."²⁷ The divide between Churchill and Mihailović was growing, and the Partisan movement was becoming not only more active, but more appealing and deserving of Allied aid and support.

The Partisan movement developed under similar circumstances. The driving force behind its founding was the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY), but by the time infighting was developing between the Partisans and Četniks, the membership encompassed more than simply Communists. Tito and his Politburo brilliantly shaped the perception and proclaimed purpose of their movement to make it both viable and inclusive. The CPY in the interwar years was a minority organization, and while the members of the CPY constituted the first waves of volunteers

²⁷ Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovic, and the Allies, 1941-1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 94.

for the Partisans' resistance, unassociated general peasantry throughout the nation joined in droves as the conflict matured.

There are several reasons why the CPY was effective in crafting a national resistance movement. First, the CPY, as with most Communists, was exceedingly creative in its nomenclature. The official



Figure 6: Partisan leadership at Vis in 1944. Tito is on the far right and Kardelj in the middle with the moustache and glasses.

name of the resistance movement was the National Liberation Front led by the Anti-Fascist Council of People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ). Milovan Djilas, a member of Tito's Politburo from Montenegro, wrote in the volume of his autobiography entitled *Wartime* that, "It was tactically more opportune – all the more so since the Comintern and Soviet Leadership so believed – not to flaunt revolutionary phrases. The term "National Liberation Struggle" was more attractive and accurate."²⁸ Djilas, along with Edvard Kardelj, the resident Marxist philosopher, and Aleksander Ranković, the chief of Tito's secret police, constituted the primary members of Tito's inner circle. A "National Liberation Struggle" was far more inclusive than a Communist uprising, but even more than eliminating political divisions, Tito strove to unite ethnic groups as well. The four primary members of Tito's Politburo were of different ethnic groups. Tito was a Croat, Ranković a Serb, Kardelj was a Slovene, and Djilas was from Montenegro. The Četnik movement was by Serbs, for Serbia and the Serbian people. The Partisan National Liberation Front was for Yugoslavia, by the Yugoslavs and thus infinitely more appealing to the masses. Tito himself, in a directive issued on August 10th, 1941 "proclaimed the main purpose of the Partisan detachments was the liberation of the peoples of Yugoslavia from the occupation forces...Partisan detachments were called National Liberation Detachments because they were the fighting formations not of any political party or group (and)

²⁸ Milovan Djilas, *Wartime* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 95.

should include all patriots, whatever their views.”²⁹ Tito was building a movement not only for the short-term goals of liberation, but a movement that would unite the nation and lend legitimacy to this struggle against the occupiers and his Četnik rivals. Tito, though he would never espouse it publicly or in the available party literature, no doubt saw AVNOJ as a building block of a Communist post-war Yugoslavia, a Yugoslavia with Tito and the CPY as the rulers. Tito would consider AVNOJ and the congresses they held in November of 1942 and 1943 precursors to post-war government, but he would never claim that this council and subsequent government would be necessarily Communist in nature.³⁰

Djilas began his revolutionary experience as chief of the Partisans in Montenegro where he led the first successful liberation of an entire part of Yugoslavia. Djilas was reprimanded, as Tito put it, because “it was incorrect to separate the Partisan struggle from the people’s uprising.”³¹ Revolution was a necessary step, according to Karl Marx, in the journey from a capitalist nation to a proletarian-ruled Communist regime, a paradigm confirmed and reinforced by the revolutionary step of Bolshevik Russia. “Revolution” was going to be difficult to reproduce as it occurred in Russia in 1917 in the case of Yugoslavia. Djilas had led a revolution in Montenegro in early 1942, and Tito, most likely advised by Kardelj, understood that the circumstances in Yugoslavia were not conducive to Bolshevik-style strong armed power. Djilas wrote that,

“Kardelj, too, believed that a revolution had already begun in Yugoslavia...To be sure it was not a ‘pure’ proletarian revolution: the uprising against the occupation made the revolution a national one, while the bankruptcy of the old regime, and its collaboration with the enemy, propelled the Communist Party to the fore as the leader. Yet if we employed the term ‘Revolution,’ the

²⁹ Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 156-157.

³⁰ Henry M. Christman ed., *The Essential Tito* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1970), 10, 15-16.

³¹ Milovan Djilas, *Wartime* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 79.

reactionaries and profascists would depict the armed struggle against the occupation as the Communists' struggle for their own and Soviet power."³²

This was the danger that both Tito and Stalin foresaw. Tito's struggle must remain nationalistic in nature and there could be no indication that it was his intention to establish a Communist post-war Yugoslavia. In a land now free of political parties save one, that last party must earn its place as the rightful heir of the nation that it was shedding its blood to liberate. Regardless of the cost in blood, regardless of the fear of possible reprisals for their resistance, Tito and his followers would throw their entire might against the occupiers and other rival national groups for the duration of the war.

B. Tito vs. Mihailović: A Conflict of Opinion in the West



Figure 7: Cartoon from *Current History* magazine, October 1942 edition.

The deficit of reliable information at the disposal of American and British newspaper editors was slowly beginning to change. An obvious amount of public interest in the guerilla warfare going on in Yugoslavia had encouraged media outlets to send correspondents into closer contact with action on the ground. The public was enamored of stories of defiance

against all odds flooding out of Yugoslavia. *Time* magazine selected Draža Mihailović along with Douglas MacArthur, Chang

Kai-shek of nationalist China, and Stepan Timoshenko of the Soviet Union as the most popular Allied generals.³³ The pro-Mihailović monopoly in the Western media was about to end as news of

³² Ibid., 95.

³³ Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 172.

Tito and even accusation of Četnik-Axis collaboration began to surface in the waning months of 1942.

The Daily Worker was the first organ of the Western press to not only recognize, but endorse Tito and his Partisans over Mihailović and the Četniks. A brief three to five page bulletin published out of New York City, *The Daily Worker* was the official newspaper of the American Communist Party, still legal as of the early 1940's. The American Communist Party or Communist Party USA was a member of the soon to be dissolved Communist international or Comintern which, guided by the Soviet Union, had worked to unite and promote the development of Communism. The paper was thus riddled with propaganda. The news, sports, and cultural coverage in *The Daily Worker* during the 1940s had three major themes. First, it nearly exclusively covered the development of the Soviet front during the war and the exploits of the Soviet government. The Soviet Union was at this time the only autonomous Communist government and served not only as a model for aspiring Communist parties, but international Communist leaders also looked toward Stalin and the Soviets as a source of guidance and direction. Second, *The Daily Worker* cataloged labor disputes and reported pro-organized labor stories. As the root of Communism is the proletariat class and the rights of the laborer, this is not surprising. Third, and perhaps most interesting considering the time period, *The Daily Worker* was an outspoken champion of racial equality, particularly racial integration of professional sports in the United States. While certainly not mainstream, *The Daily Worker* was a legitimate newspaper that covered legitimate stories, albeit with a spin toward their particular political affiliations and motivations.

Since the reports of resistance began to surface in 1941, *The Daily Worker* had toed the line along with the rest of the Western media, accepting Mihailović and publishing reports of his exploits. Quite abruptly, in July 1942, *The Daily Worker* performed an about face. In the July 27th issue, *The Daily Worker* published a report claiming that Radio Free Yugoslavia had accused Mihailović and

his Chetniks of collaboration with both quisling Yugoslavs and foreign occupiers.³⁴ *The Daily Worker* argued that Tito and his partisans did not “represent some sort of ‘Communist guerilla gangs’ but patriots who hold the interests of their people and the destiny of their country above all else.”³⁵ A measure of explanation is required. Yugoslav ambassador to the United States, Konstantin Fotić, claimed that no such entity called “Radio Free Yugoslavia” existed, but he was incorrect. In fact, Radio Free Yugoslavia was broadcasting from the Ural Mountains, managed from an office in Moscow, and was used to spew constant pro-Communist, pro-Tito propaganda into Yugoslavia during the conflict.³⁶ The Soviets were playing both sides at once. Officially, the Soviets remained pro-Mihailović, but covertly they were working to place Tito in a more advantageous position. The Yugoslavian government realized this. In a message from Prime Minister Slobodan Jovanović to Mihailović, Jovanović explained that the Yugoslavian government was insisting to the Soviets, “first on immediate cessation of radio and press campaign against Yugoslav Army under your command.”³⁷ As Radio Free Yugoslavia was broadcasting from Moscow into Yugoslavia alone, it was therefore at least quite probable that the information published in *The Daily Worker* originated from Comintern sources.

The Daily Worker continued to publish scathing reports about the Četniks over the coming years. On February 28th, 1943, in another summary of Radio Free Yugoslavia reports, the paper classed Mihailović with the likes of the German and Italian occupiers and the quisling Ustaše of Croatia reporting “severe battles between the Liberation army...against the Ustasi and Chetniks of the traitor, Draza Mikhailovitch, and that the enemy was suffering heavy losses”³⁸ Even more intriguing, published on March 11th, 1943, was yet another summary of a Radio Free Yugoslavia interview with

³⁴ Original report printed in “Slavs Rebuild Towns While Guerillas Battle Invaders,” *The Daily Worker*, (25 July 1942), 3. Report with commentary on role of Communist guerillas accompanies reprint on July 27th.

³⁵ “Slavs Rebuild Towns While Guerillas Battle Invaders,” *The Daily Worker*, (27 July 1942), 2, 4.

³⁶ Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovic, and the Allies, 1941-1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 62-63.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁸ “Yugoslavs Kill 1150 Axis Troops,” *The Daily Worker*, (28 February 1943), 2.

Dr. Metod Mikush, a Catholic priest of Ljubljana. Dr. Mikush called Mihailović and his Četniks the Judas Iscariot of the nation of Yugoslavia. Mikush said, “The Catholics of Slovenia, fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Communists, have seen the diabolical lies spread by the enemies of the Communist Party...May the ideas of Christ, the King, the idea of a great, unifying love and brotherly collaboration really become enthroned in our hearts.”³⁹ Stories like these criticizing and slandering Draža Mihailović and his Četniks appeared regularly throughout the rest of the war in *The Daily Worker*, despite marked objections by the Yugoslavian embassy in Washington. The average American did not read this publication, nor if he read it would he in every case believe the reports it printed. *The Daily Worker* was therefore by no means a mainstream publication, but its condemnations of the previously lionized Mihailović began to signify the end of his invulnerability in the Western press.

The real turn in press coverage occurred on December 19th, 1942. A Slovenian-American named

Louis Adamic published a relatively balanced and well informed analysis of not only the current situation on the ground in Yugoslavia, but about how the conflict had been portrayed in the West. His piece, published in *The Saturday Evening Post*, was entitled “Mikhailovitch: Balkan Mystery Man.” Adamic was a professional writer, author of a book called *The Native’s Return* in which he documented his return trip to his homeland of Croatia during the inter-war period. Adamic, as a native of Yugoslavia, had the excellent resource of relatives and friends on the ground in Yugoslavia who could keep him informed of the happenings and the situation in country during the war. With these resources, Adamic produced this well-informed, surprisingly accurate appraisal of activity in Yugoslavia.



Figure 8: Mihailović before the war began. From *Mikhailovitch and Yugoslav Resistance* by Alec Brown.

³⁹ “Yugoslav Priest With Partisans Assails Mikhailovitch Treachery,” *The Daily Worker*, (11 March 1943), 1.

The majority of the first half of his article was devoted to providing the average American reader who is not versed in Balkan affairs with a brief summary of the situation in Yugoslavia to date. Adamic admitted that between summer 1941 and the present, December 1942, the press had made Mihailović a, “legendary figure – a bold Balkan superman defying the monstrous Axis from his craggy mountains.”⁴⁰ He also recognized the presence of a second significant resistance group within Yugoslavia, the Partisans. His appraisal of the Partisan movement was measured. He argued that the violence between Četnik and Partisan forces erupted because “The Partisan leaders feared that he (Mihailović) was the likeliest means whereby the government-in-exile...would return to power after the war. And the Partisans were out for a new deal in Yugoslavia.”⁴¹ As previously noted, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was an illegal organization considered dangerous and subversive before the war, and Adamic astutely points out this key motivation for Partisan leadership.

To Louis Adamic, the Partisan movement had some concrete roots and there were reasons for its continued growth. Adamic argued that, following the failure of talks between Partisan and Četnik forces in the summer of 1941, the Partisans initiated the violence and Mihailović was forced to respond. The Partisan movement, because of broad support from the peasant class and support from the Soviet Union, had grown to be at least numerically on par with Mihailović and his Četniks. Adamic placed much of the blame for the resulting discord on the Soviet Union and Soviet leadership. He says that, “The fact now is that the Soviet Union has made its own the cause of the Yugoslav Partisan forces...The military skill of their commanders has improved with experience and under the tutelage of Soviet commissars and Red army officers who have been in Yugoslavia at least since last June.”⁴² This accusation is difficult to prove or disprove, though neither Tito nor Djilas in their memoirs mentioned Soviet involvement as anything more than cursory until very late in the

⁴⁰ Louis Adamic, “Mikhailovitch: Balkan Mystery Man,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, (19 December 1942), 20.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁴² *Ibid.*

war. As to the Soviet motivations, Adamic also had an idea. He seemed doubtful that the motivations of the Soviet Union concerned only the military utility of tying down thirty-odd Axis divisions in Yugoslavia. More likely, it



Figure 9: A cartoon by Dr. Seuss from 8-29-1942.

seemed to Adamic, the Third International (Comintern) and the Soviet Union were aiming to produce a “revolutionary situation.”⁴³

In his article, Adamic identified three types of government in 1942 as Democratic, Fascist, and Revolutionary Communist. Perhaps thinking beyond his time, Adamic saw Yugoslavia as a paradigm for what might come as Fascism was crushed between the two colliding theories of Democracy and Revolutionary Communism. Adamic believed the Red Army’s favor toward the Partisans could signify a greater effort throughout Europe to incite a general revolution in place of a second front that the Americans and British had yet to provide. Adamic asked the question, “Suppose Hitler could not beat down such a revolution in Europe – what then? Whether the one or the other occurs, what will have become of the third contemporary way of life – democracy?”⁴⁴ Adamic and America at large were beginning to think by 1942 that Communism’s only usefulness might be as an ally against the Axis. What would Stalin and his Comintern organization do with liberated lands after the war? It was at least obvious at this point in time that, despite reports from groups like *The Daily Worker* of collaboration and inactivity, Mihailović would remain the chosen hero and the Communist Partisans the target of skepticism.

⁴³ Ibid., 86.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

During late 1942 into the fall of 1943, the media in both the United States and Great Britain remained generally pro-Mihailović with a few exceptions, toeing the line drawn by their respective governments. Mihailović remained the known factor, the solid emblem of resistance, while the Partisan movement remained largely faceless, associated only with the Soviets. In the American political magazine *The Nation*, John Gerber and Alfred Kantorowicz provided an overview of guerilla activity in Europe. Of Yugoslavia, they wrote that, “of the two major Yugoslav guerilla groups, that headed by General Mihailovich has Anglo-American support and the so-called ‘partisan’ group has Soviet support. The Yugoslav government-in-exile recognizes both, but recognizes the ‘partisans’ only to oppose them.”⁴⁵ With two conflicting groups both fighting the Axis and apparently each other as well, the Western leaders faced a decision. Which group would they support, and how would they measure its merits? As of early summer 1943, neither Britain nor the United States had officially recognized the activity of the Yugoslavian partisans and both continued open support of Draža Mihailović.⁴⁶

The majority of the Western press followed in kind. Carol Thompson, the Balkan correspondent for the foreign affairs periodical *Current History*, who had been reporting on the conflict in Eastern Europe for the war’s duration, remained a staunch supporter of Mihailović. Thompson reported that the Partisans made two primary accusations of Mihailović. These were, “their belief that he (Mihailović) has made deals with the Italians, and their feeling that he has been content to dawdle along avoiding open conflict.”⁴⁷ She dismissed these claims and reported Mihailović’s subsequent denials, but most critical were her views on Mihailović as a unifying force. To Thompson, Mihailović was the best hope for a stable and unified post-war Yugoslavia. “If Mikhailovich can make an arrangement with the Croatian groups (Partisans), he may be helping to

⁴⁵ John W. Gerber and Alfred Kantorowicz, “Europe Against Hitler: The Guerilla Fighters,” *The Nation*, (8 May 1943), 667.

⁴⁶ That decision to publicly recognize Partisan activity came in the last week of July, 1943, as reported by *Time* magazine in “Pat for the Partisans” on August 2nd, 1943.

⁴⁷ Carol Thompson, “Yugoslavia: Mikhailovich and Unity,” *Current History*, 4 (May 1943), 196.

solve a big problem for the future.”⁴⁸ The “big problem” she referred to was the rebuilding of a shattered nation, a nation that failed in its first experiment with democracy. A unified and balanced distribution of power among the ethnic groups would be key in a democratic post-war Yugoslavia, and Thompson believed that if the Partisans would submit themselves to the authority of now Secretary of War Mihailović, a unified resistance movement might produce a unified government after the war.

The entirety of the media was not so pro-Mihailović. *Time* magazine, which hailed Mihailović as “Eagle of Yugoslavia” in May, 1942, published a scathing article on December 14th, 1942, just five days prior to Louis Adamic’s article in the *Saturday Evening Post*. It was entitled “Mihailovich Eclipsed” *Time* quoted a German war correspondent who said, “they emerged like cats from everywhere, knives between their teeth...Men women and children flung themselves into the attack.”⁴⁹ The war correspondent was referring not to the Četniks, but to the Partisans whom *Time* praises, claiming that the American public had been “misled” into believing Mihailović was leading the greatest resistance. Tito himself was not mentioned, but his primary statesman Dr. Ivan Ribar was, and *Time* refers to the November, 1942 formation of AVNOJ in Bihać, even hailing it as the “provisional government.” The BBC was another major media outlet to move early to the side of the Partisans. The Yugoslav section of the BBC moved decidedly toward the Partisans in early 1943, reporting their activities first and placing less emphasis on the Chetniks. This prompted Mihailović to respond publically saying, “The propaganda over the London radio is provoking greater and greater revulsion among the people...the speakers on the London radio are almost exclusively Croats, while the remainder, if any of them are Serbs, then they are Communists.”⁵⁰ The BBC’s section of Yugoslavian reporters continued to voice their subtle support for the Partisan movement in

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹ “Mihailovich Eclipsed” *Time*, (14 December 1942).

⁵⁰ David Martin, *Patriot or Traitor: The Case of General Mihailovich* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1978.), 100.

the coming years. Opinions like these were still rare in the Western Press, though as 1943 drew to a close doubt was growing in the minds of the Western leadership as to who truly deserved their support.

C. Mihailović: A Hero in Popular Culture

The heroism and defiance against all odds of the Yugoslavian resistance groups being covered by the Western press proved to be fuel for a different kind of publicity. The epic saga of Draža Mihailović and his Četniks inspired movies, books, and even individual public action to encourage increased aid to these foreign freedom fighters. Coverage and publicity in popular culture had a profound effect on shaping how the American and British people perceived the conflict in Yugoslavia as the images of Mihailović and his Četniks provided helped the common person

personalize and sympathize with the Yugoslavian guerillas.



Figure 10: From <http://www.serbianna.com/columns/savich/098.shtml>

On January 11th, 1943, Twentieth Century Fox released *Chetniks: The Fighting Guerillas* to general audiences across the United States.⁵¹ The film indeed focused on Draža Mihailović as its protagonist and followed his efforts to save the Croatia town of Kotor along the Dalmatian coast. Mihailović, who was played by Dutch-born actor Phillip Dorn, dealt with a

further complicated situation when his wife and two children are captured by a Gestapo officer in order to blackmail him. The film is brief and filled with simple, heroic scenes, and in the end, predictably, Mihailović manages to save both his family and the city of Kotor.

⁵¹ All following quotes and summaries concern *Chetniks: The Fighting Guerillas*, DVD, directed by Louis King (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 1943).

The key part of the movie was not necessarily the stock Hollywood plot but the way that the writers and directors chose to portray Draža Mihailović, his soldiers, and his family. He is quite obviously a man of honor, who weighs his decisions carefully. In the opening scene, he and his Četniks ambush a convoy of Italian trucks and he elects to ransom away the Italians for petrol instead of executing them. While at home with his family, his son mentions that he hates the Germans who are occupying their town and would like to shoot them. Mihailović says to his son, “It is right to hate Germans, just don’t shoot so wildly that you hit your friends.” He is cool and calculating. He is not rash or quick to judgment, and he is possessed of no great bloodlust. He is a family man, portrayed much like an American father would have been in contemporary films. The family prays before they eat, love each other, and Mihailović values and respects his wife and children.

His greatest words are reserved for his countrymen who continue to resist occupation. He says, “we (the Yugoslav people) have the will to be free, our people don’t like to be conquered, so we won’t be,” in the presence of the German commander at Kotor. His greatest bit of dialogue about the strength of the Yugoslav people comes at the very end of the

Figure 11: From
<http://www.serbianna.com/columns/savich/098.shtml>



film, when he has liberated the city of Kotor and stands before the people to deliver his victory address. He says, “As long as there is a Yugoslav able to carry arms, this holy war will continue. Neither German might nor German frightfulness will deter us from the goal we have set. Complete freedom for our people.” The entire movie gives testimony to the struggle of the Četniks against all odds and the great strength and resolve of the people of Yugoslavia.

The film was certainly a shining endorsement of the Četniks and their efforts to liberate Yugoslavia, but it was completely bereft of any reference to the Partisans. Not evident on the surface, there were a few other forces covertly at work in *Chetniks*. The film was planned in conjunction with the Yugoslavian embassy in the United States which, as an arm of the official government in London, was pro-Mihailović. At the premier party in New York City, the Yugoslav ambassador to the United States, Konstantin Fotić, the films “military advisor” Milivoje Mishović, and its “technical advisor” Serge Kirzman were all invited to participate in the festivities.⁵² All three of these men were staff members at the Yugoslavian embassy in Washington. Fotić was the ambassador, Major Mishović the Assistant Military Attaché of the embassy, and Krisman a member of the embassy staff.⁵³ These men and the government they served needed Mihailović, whose reputation had suffered because of the Partisan accusations of idleness and collaboration, to be portrayed in the most positive light possible. It was evident that these two blemishes on Mihailović’s public image were directly addressed in the film. One of Mihailović’s attendant officers in the film asks him if the men passing by are German or Italian in the opening scene, to which Mihailović responds, “They are the enemy, that is enough for me.” This was in response to the growing notion that Mihailović was unwilling to fight certain enemies, picking his battles, and even accommodating certain general Allied foes. Second, Mihailović is portrayed not as an idle protector, rarely stirring from his refuge, but as a fighter of determination and ceaseless vigilance, though measured and calculating. A major accusation was that Mihailović was reluctant to attack Germans for fear of reprisals against civilians. In the film, Mihailović continues his operations despite the Gestapo Colonel Brockner’s threats to kill one hundred civilians for every dead German.

The film is certainly quite inaccurate, but accuracy was not the point of propaganda films. It lionized Mihailović in a way that news dispatches or even spotlight pieces could not. The film

⁵² “Yugoslav Party Planned,” *New York Times*, (10 May, 1943). 22

⁵³ “Photo Standalone #9,” *The Washington Post*. (21 February, 1943). S1

brought Mihailović and his Četnik soldiers into a perspective that could be more easily understood by the average American. He was just like us, or so the film would like the viewer to believe. He and his men shared our values, our goals, and our commitment to victory. They therefore deserved our support and prayers in their fight against incredible odds. The film brought a foreign, faceless conflict into clearer understanding regardless of the motivations or methods behind it.

Alec Brown, the Yugoslavian correspondent for *The Times* in London, attempted to accomplish a similar goal in his short book published in 1943 in Britain entitled *Mihailovitch and Yugoslav Resistance*. Brown was a graduate of Cambridge, earning a special diploma in Serbian and Slavonic studies. Brown taught at Belgrade University between the wars before becoming the wartime correspondent for *The Times* and Advisor to the Yugoslav Directory of Information.⁵⁴ Part biography, part exposition on Yugoslavia as a country and as a people, Alec Brown's book not only argued in favor of Mihailović against Tito and his Partisans, but also attempted to make the Četniks and their nation a more understandable quantity. Brown's primary tactic was to draw comparisons between Britain and Yugoslavia to show how similar the plights of the two nations were and what common roots they might have.

First, Brown drew similarities simply on a military basis. Both nations had experienced a feeling of complete isolation, with the citizens being punished by military attacks and the armed forces scrambling to defend their homes and families. Brown likened the plight of his nation during the Battle of Britain with what the people of Yugoslavia and their leader, Draža Mihailović, were currently enduring. He wrote, "Do not say: 'We have known nothing like it in the past.' There certainly have been great gaps in our national life when such fighting has not been necessary...But in some of our greatest moments an identical spirit has shown itself."⁵⁵ Similar is Brown's parallel

⁵⁴ "Mr. Alec Brown – Obituaries," *The Times*, (28 September 1962), 15.

⁵⁵ Alec Brown, *Mihailovitch and Yugoslav Resistance* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1943), 14.

between the against all odds mentality of Great Britain and Yugoslavia, both of which were totally surrounded by enemies at any given point during the war.

Brown also found similarities between the attitudes of the peoples of Britain and Yugoslavia. He wrote, “The real Britain takes years to know...Yugoslavia is exactly the same. How like ourselves they are, in their different ways! It is not a time honored piece of flattery to say that we are hospitable....Just the same in Serbia.”⁵⁶ The people of both nations, according to Brown, possessed a certain attitude of hospitality, though reserved, often lurking below the surface. Both nations had an indomitable spirit. Both nations in their entirety stood against the German War Machine. Only “post-Dunkirk Britain” and Yugoslavia were able to unite in Europe in 1941 into 1942 and stand against a seemingly unstoppable force. Brown wrote that, “This alone explains the living, unconquerable resistance of Yugoslavia from within the enemy ranks. Here Mihailovitch the individual and Mihailovitch the Yugoslav will stand forever as an inspiration and a guide.”⁵⁷

Brown certainly praised Mihailović as a symbol for unity and resistance within Yugoslavia and declared him specially qualified to lead a guerilla movement because of his military experience. He wrote, “Drazha Mihailovitch, we may say it confidently, is a genius. He is a genius, not merely in his uncanny ability to carry on successful warfare in occupied country, taking prisoners and capturing towns, but in his restraint.”⁵⁸ Brown attempted to portray Mihailović and Yugoslavia as a single, cohesive unit. If one fell, so would the other. The characteristics of one dictated the characteristics of the other. Alec Brown’s book worked in a similar way as the American film though in perhaps a more logical, intelligent way; it attempted to bring Mihailović and the plight of Yugoslavia down to a plane and a context that the common American or Englishman could understand. Both works obviously lionized the Četnik leader, but they also worked to build support for him by encouraging empathy among the general population of the Western Allies.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 90.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 80-81.

Fredrick Heydenau's novel *Wrath of the Eagles* continued in this vein of creating sympathetic feelings and understanding for the Četnik fighters. The novel centered on the activities of General Mihailović and a number of Četniks who fought under him, but also critical to the plot was an American liaison officer who arrived by submarine in the novel's opening scene. Ensign Stevens was selected to bring weapons and gas masks to the Četnik fighters from the United States Navy because his Serbian-born father taught him a measure of his native language. The characters and plot of this book would fit in quite well in a western film or in a modern day action movie as they fight and defeat an evil enemy against almost unimaginable odds and do so with little to no casualties. The book can be a bit unbelievable at times and is obviously a work of fiction. *New York Time* book reviewer Robert St. John called the Chetnik forces portrayed in *Wrath of the Eagles*, "Supermen, comic strip characters, capable of the fantastic."⁵⁹ They tackled a German armored division and liberated a city with nothing more than cobbled together rifles, small arms, and some well placed dynamite. The portrayal of the Četnik fighters was no doubt a bit fantastic, but Heydenau's purpose seemed to be similar to that of Alec Brown and the makers of the *Chetniks* film; Heydenau was lauding the successes and spirit of these guerillas.

Heydenau, an Austrian by birth who fought on the Serbian front during World War I,⁶⁰ made an interesting selection in choosing the primary foe for the Četniks. It was not the Germans or Italians as in the film, but the Croatian Ustaše. The book contained example after example of Ustaše brutalities and atrocities. At one point, after breaking into and trashing the china shop of an old man, Ustaše officers forced him to kneel over and over in broken glass for displaying pictures of former Serbian rulers.⁶¹ Mihailović stated in the novel that, "The Ustashi are a group of Croats in no way to be confused with the great mass of Croats. The Croats have always been opportunists. They managed to get along with the Austrians when the Austrians were in power. And they most likely

⁵⁹ Robert St. John, "Balkan Supermen," *New York Time*, (27 June 1943), BR6.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Frederick Heydenau, *Wrath of the Eagles* (New York: EP Dutton & CO. 1943), 56-57.

could find a way of cooperating with Germany herself rather than wage war against her, if they were offered political liberty.”⁶² Accusations like these of Croatian collaboration, while founded in the reality of Ustaše atrocities, were largely stereotypical and helped form anti-Croatian perceptions in the United States and elsewhere. These stereotypes would be applied to the largely Croatian Partisan

Figure 12: Ruth Mitchell, From the *Chicago Tribune*, November 21st, 1942.



(Associated Press Wirephoto.)
Using a dagger as a pointer, Ruth Mitchell, only foreign woman ever to be a member of the Chetniks, indicates on a map the area in which those Serbian guerrillas are fighting.
(Story on page 3.)

forces and help to prevent an equal level of Western acceptance.

Certain citizens in the United States and Britain turned their efforts to public advocacy to better promote their particular point of view. One example of these citizen advocates was Ruth Mitchell, sister of then recently deceased American General Billy Mitchell. Ruth Mitchell was a writer, married to an Englishman, and was traveling in Albania, writing a guidebook, when the Italian invasion and

subsequent conflict with Greece began in 1938.⁶³ Mitchell was expelled from Albania by the Italian occupiers as a suspected spy and arrived in Belgrade, where she met Comitaji leaders, a group that would eventually serve Draža Mihailović. Mitchell joined the resistance organization and purportedly fought the Germans when they invaded Yugoslavia in 1941. She was not heard from again until she was located in the Leibenau concentration camp in Wuerttemberg on December 24th, 1941. The US State Department was able to secure her release and return home by summer of 1942.

⁶² Ibid., 239.

⁶³ Information on Ruth Mitchell's experience from "Yugoslav Patriots look to US for Aid," *Christian Science Monitor*, (20 November 1942). pg. 6 and Robert St. John, "Billy Mitchell's Sister Joins Revolutionary Serb Guerillas," *The Atlanta Constitution*, (3 April 1941), 1.

In the remaining years of the war, Ruth Mitchell used her experiences in Europe as a platform for her two primary advocacy efforts. First, Mitchell attempted to increase the awareness of the atrocities of the German concentration camp system in Europe, which she had experienced first hand.⁶⁴ Mitchell was also a strong supporter of increased US and British aid and recognition for Mihailović and the Četniks. She fought and lived with the Četniks for several months while on the ground in Yugoslavia and considered them “the heart of Serbia, and Serbia is the heart of Yugoslavia, which has dared to talk back to Hitler.”⁶⁵ Mitchell met with the President, toured the country speaking to primarily women’s groups, and even wrote a book describing her experiences and support for the Chetnik fighters of Yugoslavia. Her autobiographical book entitled *The Serbs Choose War* covers her time during the late 1930’s and the early 1940’s spent in the Balkans. The book was a narrative, but it was also a passionate argument in favor of the Četniks. Mitchell was pro-Serbian, not pro-Yugoslavian. She had little positive to say about the Croats or other ethnic groups and reserves all her praise for the Serbs and their chosen champion, Mihailović. Mitchell writes that, “The Serbs chose war. In spite of all the horrors they expected, this small race almost unanimously decide to oppose themselves against the greatest war machine of history. And in spite of the unexpected, unpredictable horrors that have befallen them, they still choose war.”⁶⁶

The book was similar in many ways to *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* written by American Rebecca West in 1937 to describe not only the journey of the author through Yugoslavia, but the author’s feelings about the land and the people around her. West’s book was quite long and focused primarily on her love of the Serbian people as both the Croats and Slovenes take a secondary role at best.⁶⁷ Mitchell too admired the Serbs and held no great love for the Croats whom she easily

⁶⁴ Genevieve Reynolds, “Billy Mitchell’s Sister, Member of Famed Serb Guerilla Band, Speaks to Newspaper Women,” *The Washington Post*, (2 December 1942), B4.

⁶⁵ “Ruth Mitchell, Guerilla-Fighting Sister of General, Is Expected in Capital Today,” *The Washington Post*, (24 August 1942), 16.

⁶⁶ Ruth Mitchell, *The Serbs Choose War* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1943), 7.

⁶⁷ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (New York: The Viking Press, 1941).

associated with the Ustaše regime. Mitchell admired the Serbs as a people for their brave struggle and for the virtues of their society. To Mitchell, the Serbs deserved Allied aid perhaps more than any other freedom fighters in Europe. Mitchell implored the American people, both in her speaking circuit and in her book, to help her fulfill her own pledge to the Serbian people. Mitchell describes this pledge in her conclusion writing that, “I gave the dying men and women of Serbia my promise that I would spend the rest of my life looking after their children. I promised them that America would never forget the bond and the debt...I pledged the honor of my country. I rely upon my countrymen with complete trust to help me to keep that pledge.”⁶⁸ Mitchell’s factual accounts of the heroism and bravery of the Serbian freedom fighters had a great impact on the American people and their perception of the conflict in Yugoslavia.

By fall of 1943, the tide of the war had turned. The Italians capitulated on September 8th and the Red Army was slowly pushing back the German advance. With the Italian surrender, the German military obligations in Yugoslavia became more pronounced and opportunities for more open resistance presented themselves. The time was ripe for a more aggressive form of opposition in Yugoslavia, and the Allies were becoming suspicious of Mihailović’s continued conservative policy. Regardless of private doubts by the leaders of the Allied forces, the public was still firmly in favor of the Četniks. This would change in the ensuing year, though gradually at best. On May 28th, 1943, British Colonel F.W. Deakin and a small contingent of liaison officers parachuted into the highlands of Montenegro as the first official diplomatic mission to Tito and the Partisans. Deakin would be followed by other British and later American liaison officers, but the establishment of official contact with a group that Churchill would barely officially recognize showed that at least Western leaders were beginning to act upon their growing doubts. As the outcome of the war began to crystallize, the question of Yugoslavia after the war became all the more prevalent.

⁶⁸ Ruth Mitchell, *The Serbs Choose War* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1943), 237.

IV. A Warp in the West

A. Churchill's Decision

The abandonment of Draža Mihailović came neither suddenly nor without careful consideration by the leaders Britain and the United States. As evidenced, Mihalović remained a bulwark in popular culture. Doubt was, however, brewing in the minds of the Western leaders, and the press at large was beginning to accept Tito as, if not a viable alternative, at least a competitor worthy of acknowledgment. While the purpose of this paper is not to present an analysis of

Figure 13: The “Big Three” at the Yalta conference in February 1945. From www.archives.gov Winter 2004 volume 36, no. 4.



precisely how and why the Allies eventually chose Tito over Mihailović, an adequate understanding of some of the main reasons is instructive. The decision came first from Churchill and the British, followed somewhat reluctantly later by Roosevelt and the Americans. Churchill spoke to parliament in February 1944 declaring his intention to shift support to Marshal Tito and ordered his liaison officers in May to leave Mihailović.⁶⁹ Churchill's reasons centered mainly on the doubts that had been growing concerning the utility of Mihailović as an ally over the previous two years coupled with the reports of the liaison officers he had dispatched to Tito's camp. Regardless of the reasons,

⁶⁹ Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovic, and the Allies, 1941-1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 375.

by summer, 1944, Mihailović had been utterly abandoned and with his defeat by Partisan forces at Drina on May 10th, 1945, he was forced into hiding.⁷⁰

As previously discussed, Churchill was aware of a certain inflexibility in Mihailović's wartime priorities. Colonel Bailey's report in February of 1943 had demonstrated that the Četnik priorities might not line up directly with overarching allied goals.⁷¹ Churchill and Roosevelt agreed with a resolution in concord with the allied forces in June of 1941 that all those fighting the axis would have three goals: They would fight against German or Italian oppression until total victory with mutual assistance among all allied parties, accept no settled peace or prosperity while the Axis continued to oppress free peoples, and the only true basis of enduring peace would be cooperation among free people both in war and in peace.⁷² Mihailović had different priorities. His policy was to husband his forces for an eventual allied liberation or German collapse and to direct his primary wrath toward internal subversive groups, particularly the Ustaše and Partisans.

In April of 1943, Churchill still had hope that Mihailović could be a useful ally. He wrote in a letter to Roosevelt that, "I believe that, in spite of his present foxy attitude, Mihailović will throw his whole weight against the Italians the moment we are able to give him any effective help. Evidently great possibilities are open in this theatre."⁷³ Bailey and Hudson had been in place now for two years as liaison officers to the Četniks and Mihailović, but the two Western leaders began internal discussions in October of 1943 to send a more focused mission to the Yugoslavian guerillas. Roosevelt proposed an American officer, Brigadier General William Donovan, head of the fledgling Office of Strategic Services or OSS, to command a bi-national liaison party to General Mihailović. Roosevelt proposed that, "all agencies working in the Balkans should be put under his direction and

⁷⁰ Ibid., 298.

⁷¹ See page 18 for the discussion of Bailey's February 1943 report.

⁷² Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), Vol. 3 *Alliance Emerging: October 1933 – November 1942*, 206.

⁷³ Ibid., Vol. 2 *Alliance Forged: November 1942 – February 1944*, 184.

the resources we put into this effort should be at his disposal.”⁷⁴ Churchill was disagreeable. Churchill considered the Mediterranean to be a place of special importance to the British cause. The Aegean theatre was nearly exclusively British and Greece became a particular point of emphasis. Roosevelt had adopted a measured hands-off policy, and thus apparently relented when Churchill, in

Figure 14: Deakin and Tito in 1943. From Deakin’s book *The Embattled Mountain*.



a responding letter, expressed doubts about Donovan’s use in the Balkans.⁷⁵

Churchill had his own plans, which he put into action without discussion with Roosevelt. Churchill did not see the purpose of sending Donovan to the Četniks. He was ready to at least examine the possible utility of an agreement with Tito and

another allied mission to Mihailović appeared redundant. Churchill made his move in May 1943. F.W. Deakin, an Oxford man and former literary partner of Churchill’s, was dropped into Yugoslavia. Churchill, hoping Yugoslavia could continue to tie down multiple German divisions, decided to put politics aside and turn to “the question of obtaining the best results from local resistance to the Axis in Yugoslavia.”⁷⁶ Deakin landed in Yugoslavia at Tito’s headquarters near the mountain of Durmitor in Montenegro. Deakin was working in a new capacity as a member of the newly formed Special Operations Executive or SOE. The SOE and their American Counterparts, the OSS, were precursors of today’s CIA and MI6. These organizations served many purposes, but their

⁷⁴ Ibid., 549.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 554.

⁷⁶ Winston S. Churchill, *Memoirs of the Second World War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), 789.

primary use was covert intelligence activity. Deakin defined the purpose of the SOE: “to organize and aid resistance in occupied Europe and to collect intelligence regarding the enemy wherever contact with resistance elements could be made.”⁷⁷

Deakin and his associates who made first contact with the Partisans were intended to determine the merits of the Partisan movement and ascertain whether a more focused mission should follow. Deakin was in doubt about the British aims within Yugoslavia. Did the British intend a split Yugoslavia with a Tito led Croatia and a Royalist Serbia or was the mission in fact as it appeared, a fact – finding venture? Deakin admitted that Mihailović, to this point, had received support both in terms of propaganda and military aid, but why now the focus on the Partisan movement that had been continually scorned?⁷⁸ Their mission, as Deakin put it, was “a thinly disguised task of espionage to assess the aims and military strength of the Partisan movement,” along with performing a rudimentary task of comparison between Četnik and Partisan activity level, location, and strength.⁷⁹ While Deakin and his men had no means of direct comparison as they remained out of contact with the mission to Mihailović, they were able to attest to the ceaseless Partisan resistance. Deakin fought alongside the Partisans and was able to accurately describe Partisan positions and strength to the SOE office in Cairo and then subsequently to Churchill himself.

The success of the Deakin mission bred further British interest in aid and reconnaissance concerning the Partisans. Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean was selected in late July 1943 to head a more complete mission with both American OSS officers and British SOE officers. Maclean had already experienced much by summer, 1943. As a member of the British consulate to Moscow during the Stalinist purges of the late 1930's, Maclean understood both the value and danger of revolutionary Communism as it had been put into practice. When approached to lead the mission to Tito, Maclean had his doubts about cavorting with Communists as he understood the aggressive, expansionist

⁷⁷ FW Deakin, *The Embattled Mountain* (Vancouver: Battleline Books, 1984), 64.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 66.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

policy of the Comintern and Stalinist Russia. Churchill's response to his doubts was simple. Churchill told him that as long "as the whole of Western civilization was threatened by the Nazi menace, we could not afford to let our attention be diverted from the immediate issue by considerations of long-term policy...Now, in the light of what the prime minister told me, my position was clear."⁸⁰ This was a critical point of distinction that now must appear obvious following the change in

Figure 15: Tito on the cover of *Time*, October 9th, 1944.



Churchill's stance. At least generally, Churchill was concerned first with victory. There are a few exceptions, markedly Greece and policy in the Aegean, but Churchill pointed out to Maclean that the focus was to determine who was making the most headway and doing the most damage against the enemy and thus to determine who was most worthy of support and aid. Maclean's task, simply put, was "to find out who was killing the most Germans and suggest means by which we could help them kill more. Politics was a secondary consideration."⁸¹ The concept was brilliantly simple, but equally demonstrative of the priorities of British involvement in Yugoslavia in the last years of the war.

⁸⁰ Fitzroy Maclean, *Eastern Approaches* (New York: Time Reading Program, 1949), 287

⁸¹ Ibid.

As Deakin before him, Maclean fought side by side with Partisan soldiers and returned glowing evaluations of Partisan strength. This prompted Churchill to write to Marshal Tito for the first time on January 8th of 1944. Churchill thanked Tito for his effort and promised additional aid from all of the Big Three, but he most importantly set out his policy for the last year of the war in Yugoslavia. Churchill writes that,

“I am resolved that the British government will give no further military support to Mihailović and will only give help to you, and we should be glad if the Royal Yugoslavian government would dismiss him from their councils... It would not be chivalrous or honorable for the British government to cast (King Peter) aside. Nor can we ask him to cut all his existing contacts with his country. I hope therefore that you will understand we shall in any case remain in official relations with him while at the same time giving you all possible military support. I hope also that there may be an end to politics on either side, for these only help the Germans.”⁸²

This letter was significant in many ways. First and clearly evident, Mihailović had been finally scorned by Churchill. He had made the final decision to pull support from the Četniks (a decision he would follow through with in February of that same year), but still remained politically committed to the official government in London. Churchill also informed Tito that “at your headquarters will soon be serving my son, Major Randolph Churchill.”⁸³ While Tito seemed to be Churchill’s chosen general, King Peter remained the respected leader. This was Churchill’s compromise. Peter would be allowed to return to Yugoslavia and Tito would need to accommodate a bipartisan government

⁸² Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), Vol. 2 *Alliance Forged: November 1942 – February 1944*, 661.

⁸³ Ibid.

sensitive to the needs of all Yugoslavians. Dr. Ivan Šubašić was selected with the approval of both Western leaders as Ban of Croatia to broker an equitable deal between Tito and the King.⁸⁴

Churchill now appeared committed to Tito, but what factors influenced his decision? Colonel Bailey's report of Mihailović's priorities was damaging, but there were other concerns. Churchill thought him too inactive and reports were surfacing in 1943 of collaboration with Germans and Italians.⁸⁵ Mihailović almost certainly collaborated with the Italians and perhaps some of his regional commanders accepted a degree of mutual accommodation with the Germans, but we must recall that his priorities centered on the protection of his country from internal dangers first and external threats second. In fairness, we are certain that Tito sent Milovan Djilas and a few other emissaries to hold negotiations with the Germans in March of 1943 and the interaction was well documented.⁸⁶ The third primary reason following accused inactivity and collaboration was the glowing evaluations that the liaison officers returned of the Partisans. The stories of their heroism in comparison to what Bailey and Hudson could report of the Četniks helped persuade Churchill that a change might be needed. There were other reasons at work behind the scenes as well.

Churchill might have conveyed to Brigadier Maclean that the Allies were forsaking long-term goals for the short-term priority of victory over the Nazis, but by late 1944, the fate of the war was beginning to crystallize. Attention needed to be paid to post-war arrangements, particularly in the jumbled mass of Eastern Europe. Churchill and Stalin met in the Kremlin at 10 PM on the night of October 9th, 1944 and decided the spheres of influence that would govern European politics for the ensuing half-century. Churchill acquiesced on the issue of Rumania, Poland, and Bulgaria which were all under some form of Soviet occupation and, in turn, Stalin agreed to abandon the Greek Communists and allow Greece and Churchill's much desired Aegean to fall under British influence.

⁸⁴ Ibid., Vol. 3 *Alliance Declining: February 1944 – April 1945*, 116, 130.

⁸⁵ Documents that evidence this accused collaboration can be found in Alec Brown, *The Treason of Mihailovitch* (London: Yugoslav Embassy Information Office, 1945), though as these were used as evidence in his trial, they are not to be relied upon.

⁸⁶ Milovan Djilas, *Wartime* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 230-258.

The so called percentages agreement defined influence in Yugoslavia as 50/50.⁸⁷ The meaning of a 50/50 share of influence is ambiguous, but clearly it did mean that neither West nor East alone would have the luxury of deciding the fate of a nation. Yugoslavia was to answer its own national question, and thus the strong were most aptly positioned to seize power when the dust settled. Regardless of association, Tito was doubtless the strongest contender as the war began to end in Yugoslavia in 1944, and Churchill would not step in to push the stronger man from power.

B. The Press Reacts

The change in the Western Press was curious over the course of the war. When Mihailović was the only option, he was the hero of Yugoslavia. When the Partisans emerged onto the scene, Mihailović remained favored though mutterings of dissent

Figure 16: Political Cartoon by David Low that appeared in the *Evening Standard* on December 23rd, 1943.



slowly began to emerge. By the end of 1943 into 1944 when it became clear that Tito would be the chosen military champion of the Western allies within Yugoslavia, those mutterings of dissent became more pronounced. Those who favored Mihailović continued to argue in his favor, but the press as a whole moved with the official stance of the Western governments into the camp of Marshal Tito. Bogdan Raditsa, a Croatian-American freelance journalist, writing for *The Nation*, introduced the Partisans to the American people in October of 1943. Raditsa claimed that the Partisans were more qualified to lead the nation and had more extensive popular support while

⁸⁷ Gale Stokes, ed., *From Stalinism To Pluralism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 31-32.

stamping Mihailović with the stigma of being obsolete. Mihailović was “the last representative of the Chetnik warriors during the nineteenth century...But he is also a product of still older Serbian traditions...This spirit is too static for today, when the Yugoslav people are fighting for a new and better world.”⁸⁸ This argument for Tito and his Partisans as the more qualified the leaders of a now ever more clouded situation in post-war Yugoslavia was a marked departure from earlier arguments. Andre Visson wrote in *The Washington Post* in January of that same year that the first major test case for United Nations post-war reorganization would be Yugoslavia. Visson tied the Partisans inexorably with Soviet Russia and claimed that Mihailović and the rightful ruler in exile should be restored to guarantee peace and stability.⁸⁹ The British press, with their leader so solidly behind Tito, stood with him in favor of Tito’s government. A correspondent in *the Times* lamented Tito’s lack of recognition by the official government. He wrote, “General Mihailovich, whose recent attitude has been inactive and ambiguous, has seen fit to keep up his feud against General Tito’s Partisans...It is even more regrettable that the Yugoslav government in Cairo...should have denied any representative quality to General Tito’s delegates and to his Government.”⁹⁰

Clearly a change had come about in how the Western press was evaluating the merits of the two contrasting forces within Yugoslavia, but a more apt question would be why? Why did this change occur? As previously mentioned, much of the attitude of the Western press corresponded with the attitude of the Western governments. Churchill had clearly, emphatically and publicly, chosen his champion, but what of Roosevelt? As mentioned, Roosevelt had generally relinquished the Balkans and the theatre in the Aegean to Churchill but for a few incursions in policy. Roosevelt had suggested that OSS head Brigadier General Donovan lead an allied mission to Mihailović in 1943 but had apparently acquiesced to Churchill’s veto. In reality, Roosevelt did send Donovan to Yugoslavia

⁸⁸ Bogdan Raditsa, “Tito’s Partisans,” *The Nation*, (2 October 1943), 381.

⁸⁹ Andre Visson, “The Yugoslav Test Case,” *The Washington Post*, 10 January 1943, B6.

⁹⁰ “Liberating Yugoslavia,” *The London Times*, (11 December 1943), Column C. {For additional evidence of this, see “The New Yugoslavia,” *The London Times*, (28 August 1944), Column F.}

as head of a solely American liaison party to Mihailović. When Churchill caught wind of this mission as late as September of 1944, he was displeased and responded. He wrote back to the President, “We are endeavoring to give Tito support and, of course, if the United States, backs Mihailovic, complete chaos will ensue...if we each back different sides, we lay the scene for a fine civil war.”⁹¹ Churchill also claimed that Donovan was “running a strong Mihailović lobby, just when we have persuaded King Peter to break decisively with him and when many of the Četniks are being rallied under Tito.”⁹² Roosevelt responded two days later promising to remove Donovan and his mission which had been founded under the legitimate purpose of evacuating downed American flyers.⁹³ Though he agreed to withdraw his mission, Roosevelt obviously remained unconvinced about the merits of supporting Tito over the previously lionized Mihailović.

Clearly Roosevelt harbored doubts, but he did not act upon those doubts publicly. The Donovan snafu was not an issue, and Roosevelt never publicly denounced Churchill’s selected course of action. More than Roosevelt’s silence on the matter, the more outspoken voices of other politicians may have swayed the perception of Yugoslavia among the members of the press and the general public. Monrad Wallgren graduated from the Washington State School of Optometry in 1915 and practiced in the State of Washington before running for and winning a seat in the US House in 1932. Wallgren succeeded a retiring Senator in 1940 and served in the US Senate as a Democrat from 1940 until 1945, then as governor of Washington State from 1945 until 1949. Wallgren spoke out on May 23rd, 1944 on the floor of the Senate, voicing his opinion on the conflict in Yugoslavia. He proposed a drastic step. Wallgren asked the United States government to follow the lead of Brazil and freeze the assets of the Royal government of Yugoslavia.⁹⁴ Wallgren argued that leaving the money available would fund Mihailović’s war effort which Wallgren claimed was a collaborationist effort.

⁹¹ Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 3 *Alliance Declining: February 1944 – April 1945*, 306.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 309.

⁹⁴ “US Seizure of Yugoslav Funds Urged,” *The Washington Post*, (24 May 1944), 2.

He favored apportioning more money for military and medical aid to Marshal Tito who he called “the George Washington of Yugoslavia.”⁹⁵ Such venomous condemnations by a leader in our nation’s highest governing body no doubt swayed many to the side of the new Eagle of Yugoslavia, Marshal Tito.

Perhaps there was an even more plain reason why coverage remained so biased toward Mihailović in the mainstream Western press until late in 1943 into 1944. The accusation of United Nations and government censorship was not uncommon. Joseph Harrison, the Middle East war correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*, was one such journalist who claimed to have been censored in the earlier years of the war. Harrison, writing in March 1944, wrote that there had been a marked change in allied opinion surrounding General Mihailović in recent weeks. Now newspaper reporters, wiring their stories through Allied command in Cairo, were “permitted to use the word ‘Chetnik’ to describe the Mihailovic Guerillas accused of attacks upon Partisan forces.”⁹⁶ Harrison wrote further that, “Despite the fact that Partisans have been speaking of these attacks for many months, we have been unable to mention them from here due to Allied concern for the feeling of the Yugoslav government in exile.”⁹⁷ It was Harrison’s belief that this easing of the censorship symbolized a wish for broader publicity among Allied leaders for the Partisans and a movement away from the Royal Government of Yugoslavia. In a similar claim, an Associated Press reporter claimed that portions of an AP interview with Tito had been removed when he began to criticize Mihailović. The reasoning for the censorship was first, a protection of confidential military information and second, a desire to prevent Tito from using popular pressure against Allied policy.⁹⁸

There were, at times, quite legitimate reasons to prevent the imbedded press corps from simply writing whatever they pleased. These concerns were primarily military in nature, but this evidence of

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Joseph G. Harrison, “Yugoslav Policy,” *Christian Science Monitor*, (10 March 1944), 7.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ “Tito Reference to Mihailovic Barred From Story,” *The Washington Post*, (17 March 1944), 1.

political censorship also showed an effort to control perception through a tight watch on the stories written by press correspondents on the ground. The greater implication of this evidence is that perhaps the press had been pro-Tito since his emergence in 1942 onto the global stage or at least a number of them had decided in favor of the Partisans before Churchill. At least these examples show that some correspondents would have been willing to write stories in favor of Tito some time before the censorship was lifted. Regardless, by summer 1944, Tito had supplanted Mihailović nearly

Figure 17: Captain Todorovitch in Washington, 1944.
From the *New York Times*, April 19th, 1944.



Capt. Borislav Todorovitch talking with newspaper men in Washington yesterday
 Associated Press Wirephoto

completely as the darling of the Western press.

Not everyone was toeing the line drawn by Churchill. One group in particular was outspoken in favor of the Četnik leader. We must recall that Roosevelt claimed that one of the purposes of the Donovan mission in 1943 was to evacuate downed American airmen. This was no farce as many airmen were rescued with the help of Četniks on the ground.

These evacuated airmen were quite vigorous advocates of additional aid for Mihailović once they returned home.⁹⁹ Despite these smatterings of support, Mihailović and the leaders of the Royal Yugoslav Government were beginning to recognize that they were no longer the darlings of the Western press. Captain Borislav Todorovitch, an officer under Mihailović, was sent to Washington to meet with the press and lobby the government to provide more material aid. Todorovitch accused the Partisans of Nazi collaboration and claimed they had “conducted a reign of terror by killing

⁹⁹ “Mission for Mihailovich,” *Time*, (27 May 1946).

prominent peasants and burning property in villages,” and he further claimed that, “The partisans were 90 percent Communists bent upon furthering their ideology.”¹⁰⁰ Todorovitch was clearly a political lobbyist, but his words demonstrate how deep the rift had become in Yugoslavia and what a difficult task lay ahead for the Western leaders if they hoped to glue the country back together. Churchill would use the newly appointed Ban of Croatia, Dr. Ivan Šubašić, to bridge the growing gap between Tito and the King Peter and craft a post-war Yugoslavia that could be equitable for all.

By 1944, Tito and AVNOJ had been moved by the British to a more secure location on the offshore island of Vis along the Dalmatian coast.

Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean had worked with outside British aid to establish a more secure location for the Partisan leadership as they had experienced a number of dangerous situations while stationed throughout Bosnia. There Tito was more accessible to the Western governments and traveled to meet Churchill in mainland Italy. It was during this time of increased exposure that Šubašić began his efforts to broker a deal between Tito and King Peter. Šubašić was successful and the Tito – Šubašić agreement was a landmark for the legitimacy of Tito as a leader of Yugoslavia. The agreement was simple. Tito would lead the military and King Peter would head a new, mutually agreed upon ruling cabinet. This agreement would prevail until the war was over and a plebiscite would be held following the war to determine what the public desired in the form of a post-war government. *Time* magazine reported the Tito – Šubašić agreement and its implications in July of 1944 and astutely suggested a major issue with the rise of ethnically Croatian Josip Broz Tito and

Figure 18: King Peter and Ivan Šubašić in London in 1944.



¹⁰⁰ “Allied Aid Sought For Mikhilovitch,” *New York Times*, (19 April 1944), 5.

Ivan Šubašić. The Serbian people and their hero Mihailović appeared almost utterly left out and forgotten. *Time* wrote that “Winston Churchill had truly said that the Serbian problem could not be dismissed by dismissing Draža Mihailovich. Yugoslavia's chances for permanent unity still depend on the new Government's success in dealing with the proud, tough Serbs of Serbia.”¹⁰¹ Tito understood what his task would be should he be able to solidify his power following the war, and he was prepared to undertake the necessary measures to secure his position.

Yugoslavia was generally liberated by mid 1944 with one primary exception. The major cities, particularly Belgrade, remained protected by entrenched German armor. The Partisan guerillas, though effective in their deadly art of ambush and rural warfare, were ill equipped and unprepared to confront the German armor that protected the major cities, islands in a sea of chaos for the German military. Tito understood that he could not expect aid of the kind needed to accomplish his goals of completed liberation from the Americans or British. The Soviets, however, were pressing swiftly through Eastern Europe preparing to batter down the doors of the German homeland. Tito understood that asking Stalin for aid was dangerous. Stalin was already in preparation for the post-war era, with leaders ready for the liberated nations. With Rakosi in Hungary, Beirut in Poland, and Ulrich in Germany, Stalin used liberation as a pretext for forced restructuring. With these reservations, Tito disappeared from Vis in September of 1944. Tito met with Stalin in Moscow without the knowledge or consent of the Western Allied leaders. There he and Stalin agreed exactly how far into Yugoslavia Soviet forces would be allowed to penetrate and how long they would be permitted to remain. They would press in only to liberate the cities from the German armor with Partisan support and immediately withdraw leaving few if any men as a garrison.¹⁰² In this way Tito maintained his political and military autonomy while

¹⁰¹ “For Unity,” *Time*, (17 July 1944).

¹⁰² Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 230-232.

still making use of Soviet might to allow him to liberate his nation. Tito understood Stalin's plans for Eastern Europe following the war and was eager to secure his own post-war

Figure 19: Tito's second appearance on the cover of *Time*, September 16th, 1946



sovereignty and independence from Red Army occupation.

Stalin, having left Tito much to his own devices early in the war, had been running a strong pro-Tito lobby since 1943. Radio Free Yugoslavia from the Urals was one example of pro-Partisan propaganda. In May of 1944, *Time* reported Stalin's statements in favor of Tito and his Partisans. Stalin said that "It is high time . . . the Governments of the United Nations broke off diplomatic relations with the bankrupt group of Yugoslav officials and police in Cairo who

represent nobody but themselves. It is high time to recognize [Tito's] Government."¹⁰³ Stalin also argued to Churchill in favor of the Partisans in private correspondence in 1943 in which he argued that "I find it difficult even to point to the difference between the Émigré government of Poland and the similar Émigré government of Yugoslavia, or between certain Generals of the Polish Émigré government and the Serbian General Mikhailovich."¹⁰⁴ Stalin considered the Yugoslavian Royal Government out of touch and their chosen champion unworthy of continued Allied support. Tito needed Stalin's aid, but he avoided any concrete relationship or association because Tito was not prepared to answer to Stalin in the post-war arrangement of Eastern Europe. Tito planned to govern his own nation autonomously, and he needed to remove any

¹⁰³ "For King and Country," *Time*, (1 May 1944).

¹⁰⁴ Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 3 *Alliance Declining: February 1944 – April 1945*, 70.

threat to the stability that he hoped to forge. What internal factors could threaten him? Peter had been neutralized for all intents and purposes, but the “Eagle of Yugoslavia,” the hero of the first years of the war and champion of Serbia, Draža Mihailović remained. Tito was gained absolute power for all intents and purposes (whether legitimately or not) in the post-war plebiscite and established the Federal Peoples’ Republic of Yugoslavia. Mihailović was already in hiding, realizing the futility of continued resistance against the new regime. He was captured on March 13th, 1946 and prepared to stand trial for his supposed war crimes.

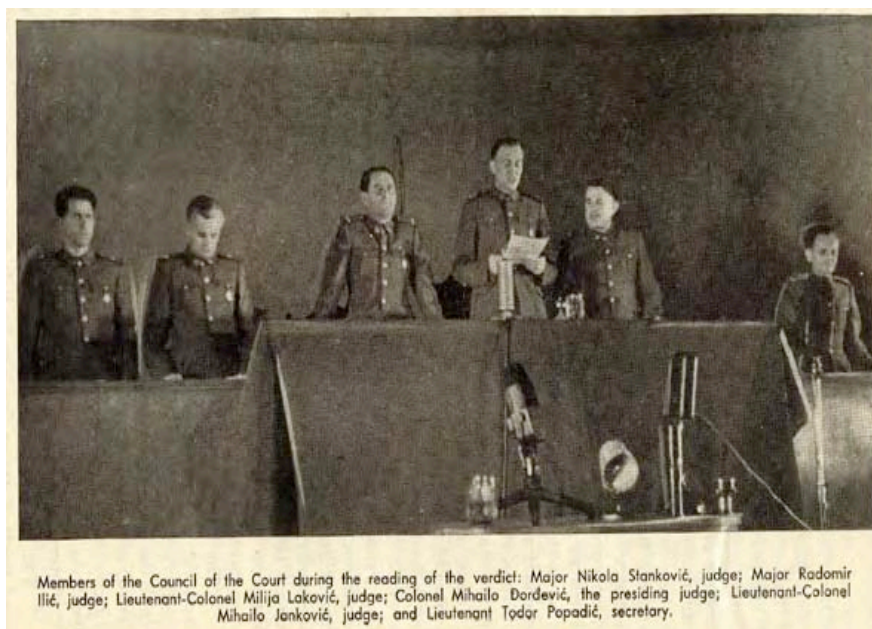
V. Conclusion

A. Topčider Infantry Academy, Belgrade, July 15th, 1946

Draža Mihailović stood to speak on his own behalf for the first time on July 10th. Having endured countless sessions of examination by the state military prosecutor Miloš Minić and endured his stinging closing argument,

he was spent. He spoke for four hours in his own defense, pleading with the military tribunal to examine the evidence justly. He said, “I believed I was on the right road, but fate was merciless to me when it threw me into this maelstrom. I wanted much, I started much, but the gale of the world carried away me and my work.”¹⁰⁵ He attempted to justify the anti-Yugoslav actions and

Figure 20: The military judges read the verdict on July 15th, 1946 from the stenographic record of the trial.



¹⁰⁵ “The Gale of the World,” *Time*, (24 June 1946). The transcript of the courtroom proceedings is available in Union of Journalists Association of the Federative People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, *Trial of Dragoljub – Draža Mihailović* (Belgrade: State Printing House, 1946).

collaboration he was accused of having engaged in, but it was to no avail. Just five days later, on July 15th, he was sentenced to death by firing squad, a sentence which was carried out three days later after the rejection of an appeal for clemency. For better or worse for Yugoslavia, Draža Mihailović was gone and Tito would decide the fate of the nation.

The reaction in Britain was measured, but in the United States, many news outlets were skeptical of the charges and the methods used by the prosecution. *Time*'s appraisal was perhaps most astute, writing that, "To millions who remembered his early heroism, his rescue of US and British flyers, it was hard to believe Mihailovich a traitor. What, then, was he guilty of? ... When the US and Britain threw their support to Tito, Mihailovich, too weak or too weary to control his subordinates, turned more & more to collaboration. His major crime – unpardonable in war and politics – was failure."¹⁰⁶ The American government made available some of the airmen who had been rescued by the Četnik guerillas to testify, but the Yugoslavian government under Tito would not allow it. Truman also awarded Mihailović posthumously a legion of merit medal in recognition of his wartime valor, but the United States provided him little real help in his time of need and Britain less. The half-hearted efforts of the U.S. government to aid their once heralded ally were perhaps indicative of those doubts that Roosevelt had harbored concerning the decision to aid Tito. Alex Dragnich, a professor of Political Science at Western Reserve University, wrote an appraisal of the trial in *Current History* magazine. Dragnich offered both an appraisal of the American attitude of the trial and an idea of why Mihailović ultimately failed in his endeavors. He wrote, "We had supported Mikhailovitch early and our shift to Tito was grudgingly made. We followed Great Britain with great reluctance in abandoning Mikahilovitch. Many Americans regretted and opposed our course. To them the State Department apparently felt indebted to [offer to send witnesses on behalf of Mihailović]."¹⁰⁷ Dragnich claims that Mihailović's main error was that, "he allowed himself to become a tool of the

¹⁰⁶ "Too Tired," *Time*, (24 June 1946).

¹⁰⁷ Alex Dragnich, "The Mikhailovitch Trial," *Current History*, 11 (August 1946), 116.

discredited politicians in the Yugoslav government-in-exile, who were of the same political hue as the more immediate advisors surrounding him...There is reason to believe that he was personally honest, but politically immature.”¹⁰⁸

This seemed to be a quite accurate assessment. Mihailović became associated with a dying governing body hundreds of miles away and, while Tito was winning by attrition, Mihailović was betrayed by his own personal concern for his people. Mihailović did not understand the priorities of the Western leadership or comprehend the impact that a loss of Western support could have on his guerilla movement. Mihailović became associated with the old and the antiquated while Tito was the face a new age in Yugoslavia. The old Yugoslavia died when Draža Mihailović was executed. Only he had the clout to reestablish a crumbling regime and provide it legitimacy on the international stage. With his death, Tito knew his future and that of a Communist Yugoslavia would become

Figure 21: Vukovar water tower in Croatia damaged during the Wars of Yugoslav Succession. From www.croatia.org/crown/articles/9280/1/Vukovar.



secure. There would be no conflict of opinion as to who the true war hero of Yugoslavia was, at least not openly, and the fateful but gradual decision to abandon Mihailović in favor of Tito coupled with his support in the Western press made this reality possible.

B. Conclusion and Perspective

On May 8th, 1980, thousands gathered to see the man who had led Yugoslavia for nearly forty years be laid to rest. Leaders from over one hundred nations witnessed the end of what was the most stable era to date

in the Yugoslav Republics. Just a decade later, the nation that Tito had built collapsed in the bloodiest, most ethnically charged conflict since 1945 in Europe. The Second World War allowed Yugoslavia to decide its own national question in a way that it had been unable to do during its brief

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 117.

democratic experiment of the early 1920's. Tito unified and held together a nation that had simply compromised on ethnic issues in favor of mutual survival. The Second World War bred ethnic cooperation in some ways, but in other ways, Tito's rise to power built the foundation of the later Wars of Yugoslav Succession. When Slobodan Milošević rose to prominence in Serbia during the early 1990's, he demanded more Serbian power and autonomy. Milošević claimed that the Serbs had been slighted during the preceding decades and deserved their rightful place as the preeminent ethnic group among the south Slavs. Mihailović's failure was devastating to the Serbian people because it guaranteed that they would lose their position of power. Tito ushered in an era of ethnic cooperation, but the Serbs received the smallest proportional share of power. Maurice Western wrote in the Canadian foreign affairs magazine *International Journal* in 1946 that "All nationalities were represented in (Tito's) cabinet, but, while there were many Serbs...they were not "Serbs from Serbia" – an important distinction to Belgrade critics."¹⁰⁹ The Serbs felt betrayed by the Western leaders and frustrated that their champion had been scorned. The ripples of Mihailović's defeat spread for years to come in Yugoslavia and would be used as justification for war and genocide in what is now the former Yugoslavia.

Michael Lees published a retrospective look at Tito's movement into prominence in 1990 which he entitled *The Rape of Serbia*.¹¹⁰ This book, along with David Martin's *Web of Disinformation*,¹¹¹ both claimed that Churchill's decision to abandon Mihailović was based on faulty intelligence and biased liaison officers. David Martin has been arguing in favor of Mihailović for years now, publishing multiple books, but both men expressed doubts common in modern scholarship about the correctness of Churchill's decision. Did Churchill's decision really amount to the "Rape of Serbia" and was it based on faulty information? Probably to a degree, but that is difficult to know for sure.

¹⁰⁹ Maurice Western, "Liberty in Yugoslavia," *International Journal*, 1 (January 1946), 52.

¹¹⁰ Michael Lees, *The Rape of Serbia: The British Role in Tito's Grab for Power 1943-1944* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990).

¹¹¹ David Martin, *The Web of Disinformation* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990).

His decision clearly had a major, decisive impact on the future of post-war Yugoslavia. Whether correct or misled, Churchill influenced the course of European politics as well as the perception of Tito and Mihailović in the British and American public. The real post war danger was, as Maurice Western wrote, that “The instinct for liberty is as deep in the South Slav nations as it is anywhere, but idealists can often be led down the garden path...How it will eventually go, it is much too soon to predict.”¹¹²

Regardless of the future consequences, Josip Broz Tito had been given the right to guide the fate of a battered and broken nation in the way that he chose. The conflict of ideology, of methodology, and of priorities between Mihailović and Tito had been decided thanks in no small part to the role of the Western governments and public in the development of the conflict. Of the two contrasting journeys, only one would continue on. The other would die with the old Yugoslavia that he loved. Unfortunately for Draža Mihailović, he aligned himself with the dying part of Yugoslavia and a dying institution in general, the monarchy. The monarchy had become insignificant, in part because of its failure to establish stability during the inter-war period and in part because of the weakness Peter showed during the war itself. Mihailović was always fighting an uphill battle, attempting to defend a dying institution against the popular winds of revolutionary change that Tito represented. Perhaps only an Allied landing in the Balkans could have salvaged victory for Mihailović, but both Roosevelt and Stalin were opposed and Churchill abandoned this course of action quite early.¹¹³ Victory was for Mihailović not an impossibility, at least in the short run, but in the long run, defeat was perhaps an inevitability. Tito would not be a member of the Communist bloc in like mind with the other nations of Eastern Europe. He would not join the Warsaw pact and clashed with both Stalin and Khrushchev in the coming years, but neither would Tito join NATO and the Western camp. Tito, as during the war, would remain fiercely independent, a man of resolve and ambition. We can

¹¹² Maurice Western, “Liberty in Yugoslavia,” *International Journal*, 1 (January 1946), 54.

¹¹³ Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovic, and the Allies, 1941-1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 321.

never know, however, how Draža Mihailović would have led his nation had he emerged victorious. For better or for worse, Yugoslavia was Tito's to lead.

Winston Churchill, bereft of office due to the pitfalls of a parliamentary system, delivered a speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri on March 5th, 1946. He famously said, "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent."¹¹⁴ With Trieste, he referred to Yugoslavia and the city that Tito was reluctant to relinquish to the Italians. He spoke of Tito in a less than positive tone, perhaps understanding the consequences of accepting post-war complications for wartime utility. The guerilla war in Yugoslavia was a polarizing topic during the war and remains a polarizing topic today, both inside and outside of the former Yugoslav republics. What began as a grassroots effort to resist those who would occupy their homeland became a political struggle that embroiled world leaders and influenced the hearts and minds of average citizens in the West. The impact of the Western leaders' decisions was great on the Western press and its coverage of the conflict, but it was even greater on the actual conflict in Yugoslavia. The war changed a nation, and the decisions of the leaders of the Western Allies shaped the future of the turbulent Balkans and helped to decide the fate of two men who, though ideologically opposed, were united by a common love of their homeland and belief that they could unite, rebuild, and restore a nation and the many people that called it home.

¹¹⁴ James W. Muller, *Churchill's "Iron Curtain" Speech Fifty Years Later* (New York: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 8.

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